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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 08 TEL AVIV 002750

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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The Jerusalem Post quoted American officials as saying that the US is attempting to renew talks between the Israeli and Palestinian leadership despite the crisis in Gaza. The Jerusalem Post reported that a senior US administration official told the newspaper Monday: "The Israeli Prime Minister met briefly with Abu Mazen in Amman and spoke about opening a bilateral process. We would like to see such a process moving forward." The official reportedly stressed that the main immediate objective concerning the situation in the Gaza Strip is "to get Shalit released" referring to Cpl. Gilad Shalit who was kidnapped by Palestinians over two weeks ago.

Reporting on the United States' criticism of a comment by Khaled Mashal, the head of Hamas's political bureau comment, that Cpl. Shalit will not be released without Israel giving something in exchange, Israel Radio quoted State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack as saying Monday: "The root cause of this current situation is the fact that a group of terrorists tunneled into Israeli territory, killed two soldiers, and took this individual hostage." The radio also quoted McCormack as saying: "It might be easy for him to dictate from Damascus and to speak on behalf of the Palestinian people, but it is really the Palestinian people themselves who suffer as a result of the fact that Khaled Mashal and Hamas are now head of the PA that is not a negotiating partner for the Israeli government or the rest of the world."

All media reported that Mashal stressed at a press conference in Damascus Monday the Cpl. Shalit would be freed only as part of a prisoner-release deal. Mashal was quoted as saying that all mediation initiatives had failed because Israel was prepared only to promise to release prisoners, but not to fully commit to it. Leading media said that Mashal focused on the unity of the Palestinian people. Maariv reported that the IDF knows that Palestinian FM Mahmoud Zahar was aware of Shalit's planned abduction before it happened, which Maariv says turns him into an assassination target. Israel Radio reported that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak demands that Syrian President Bashar Assad expel Mashal from Damascus because of Mashal's refusal to release Shalit. Israel Radio quoted Arab sources as saying that Mubarak sent a message to Assad, saying that Hamas and Mashal will ruin the entire Middle East, including the Damascus regime. Israel Radio reported that Arab League Secretary-General met with Mashal Monday and tried to soften his views. The radio quoted Arab sources as saying that Mashal demanded guarantees that Israel would free thousands of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Shalit's release. Israel Radio cited the Saudi newspaper Okaz as saying that Israel sent Mashal a message, saying that it would release all senior Hamas officials it detained in exchange for Shalit's release. Ha'aretz and The

Jerusalem Post reported that on Monday in London, a delegation of the British Jewish community, including MPs, met with the Syrian Ambassador to the UK, presenting him with a letter to Assad in which he was urged to press Hamas representatives in Damascus to act in favor of Shalit's release. Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that demonstrations calling for Shalit's release took place Monday next to Syrian embassies in various Western capitals under the auspices of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency.

In its lead story, Yediot reported that the IDF operation might fail because of a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The newspaper, which bannered: "They Have No More Food." Yediot cited the assessments of Israel's intelligence agencies that the supply of food and basic necessities in Gaza is adequate only for a few days. Ha'aretz and other media reported that on Monday, eight Palestinians were killed in IDF offensive in the Gaza Strip. Ha'aretz reported that in addition, an 18-month-old baby who was wounded in the IDF's bombing of Khan Yunis last month, died at a Gaza hospital Monday.

Ha'aretz, Maariv, and Hatzofe reported on disagreement among the leaders of PM Ehud Olmert's Kadima party over the feasibility of a unilateral withdrawal in the West Bank. "The chances of implementing the convergence plan at the moment are very slight," Housing and Construction Minister Meir Sheetrit told the Knesset-TV channel yesterday. "There are many doubts, my own among them. I do not believe in unilateral disengagement." FM Tzipi Livni, who responded on behalf of the government on Monday to no-confidence motions, told the Knesset that Israel needs to protect its security interests during the convergence, and warned against a hasty unilateral move. Ha'aretz reported that Avi Dichter, a former Shin Bet chief and current Internal Security Minister, told the newspaper over the weekend that the IDF must stay "everywhere" in the West Bank even after dismantling settlements there, "until a Palestinian entity is found that can take responsibility."

Leading media reported that Palestinian groups Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades of Fatah and the Jerusalem Brigades of Islamic Jihad announced jointly on Monday night that they had successfully launched a Qassam rocket from Jenin in the northern West Bank toward the community of Ram-On in northern Israel. The Jerusalem Post cited the Palestinian groups as saying that the rocket landed in the Palestinian autonomous area. In its lead story, The Jerusalem Post reported that IDF sources rejected the Palestinian report, saying that not only had the rocket not landed in the Palestinian autonomous area, but that it had never even been fired. Ha'aretz, Yediot, and Maariv filed similar reports.

All media reported that on Monday, Maj. Gen (res.) Giora Eiland presented to Chief of Staff Lt. Gen Dan Halutz the findings from his investigation into the circumstances surrounding the Kerem Shalom terrorist attack two weeks ago, in which Cpl. Gilad Shalit was abducted. The committee described the attack as an "operational failure," as opposed to the thwarting of 61 infiltration attempts for Gaza into Israel since the disengagement. The media reported that the committee refrained from recommending sanctions against officers in the Gaza Division.

The Jerusalem Post quoted a spokeswoman of the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, who identified herself as Um-al-Abed, as saying Monday in Gaza that the group had recruited 100 Palestinian suicide bombers to launch suicide attacks against Israel.

Ha'aretz, Maariv, and Israel Radio reported that outgoing Japanese PM Junichiro Koizumi will arrive in Israel this evening on his first visit to Israel and the PA. He is scheduled to meet with the principal Israeli leaders on Wednesday and with PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas on Thursday. Ha'aretz wrote that Koizumi "wishes to increase his country's involvement in the Middle East. As the biggest donor to the PA after the EU, Japan feels it is time to cash in on its investment by becoming a mediator between the two sides."

Ha'aretz reported that academic degrees awarded by Yeshiva University are recognized by Harvard and Yale Universities, but not by the Israeli Education Ministry, which claims that they do not meet Israeli criteria. Ha'aretz noted that it first raised this issue one-and-a-half years ago, but that nothing has changed since then.

All media continued to report on developments related to the alleged extortion of Israeli President Moshe Katsav by a former employee of the President's Residence who threatened to file a criminal complaint of sexual harassment against Katsav.

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Mideast:  
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Summary:

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Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The determination of the Prime Minister ... promises Israel, the Palestinians, and the regional states more long days of talks behind the scenes in order to eventually reach a formula that would satisfy the wolf and leave the sheep intact."

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz: "What moved Khaled Meshal to hold a press conference yesterday, of all days, without saying anything new? The answer is that after the recent flood of statements, Meshal wanted to make it very clear that he was Hamas' sole political architect. Such public displays usually take place after the failure of secret negotiations or when someone wants to take credit for an expected success..."

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The fiercer the attacks on the rocket-launchers and their bosses in Gaza, the more the captured soldier has gone from being an asset to a liability for Hamas. It is no coincidence that Ismail Haniyeh proposed a cease-fire and offered to release Shalit in exchange for Israel's release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners. Olmert was right to turn down that offer. Israel should not grant this murderous terror organization recognition and legitimacy..."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "Tehran's inclusion in this equation, i.e. solving of the mystery of Ron Arad after so very many years, could shuffle the cards and change the rules that the Prime Minister declares three times a day."

Block Quotes:

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I. "The Wolf and the Sheep"

Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (7/11): "At this stage it important that Hamas take great care of the abducted soldier, since he constitutes the major asset it has had over the past few years. The IDF should take care not to put Gilad [Shalit's] life at risk in a random operation. On the Israeli side, the determination of the Prime Minister, who on Monday reiterated his declaration that Israel will not negotiate or release prisoners, promises Israel, the Palestinians, and the regional states more long days of talks behind the scenes in order to eventually reach a formula that would satisfy the wolf and leave the sheep intact."

II. "Arm-wrestling within Hamas"

Senior Arab affairs writer Zvi Bar'el opined in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (7/11): "What moved Khaled Meshal to hold a press conference yesterday, of all days, without saying anything new? ...The answer is that after the recent flood of statements, Meshal wanted to make it very clear that he was Hamas' sole political architect. Such public displays usually take place after the failure of secret negotiations or when someone wants to take credit for an expected success..... Meshal is apparently guided by the fear that the Hamas leadership in the territories could take initiative, with regard to the terms for Shalit's release, and deprive him of control over the political event. ...This theory is supported by the fact that in the two weeks that Abbas spent in the Gaza Strip, he managed to create a political liaison body with Hamas, which hammered out the final details of the new and improved prisoners' document in preparation of its implementation.....Meshal believes he still has enough time to force Israel into a prisoner exchange. In the meantime, however, the Saudi-Egyptian initiative is

developing. This is a comprehensive proposal to be submitted to Washington that is to include a full cease-fire, the release of Shalit and the Palestinian prisoners and the adoption of the national document in order to remove the boycott of Hamas. If this is adopted - and that depends mainly on Israel - it will take the ball out of Meshal's court and return it to the PA under broader Arab patronage

### III. "With A Billy-club in hand"

Senior columnist Yoel Marcus opined in independent, left-leaning Haaretz 7/11: "Ehud Olmert did good .... when he got a grip on himself and provided encouragement and backing for Summer Rains. Summer Rains is a "rolling operation," without a completion date but with two clearly defined objectives - to put an end to the Qassam attacks on towns and cities in Israel, and bring about the release of Corporal Shalit. ...It is wrong to stand over the army with a stopwatch in hand when a multi-task operation is in process. Complex operations like Summer Rains in which all branches of the military work together - going in, striking, retreating and then starting over again, so as not to become sitting ducks a la Lebanon - do not end overnight.... The fiercer the attacks on the rocket-launchers and their bosses in Gaza, the more the captured soldier has gone from being an asset to a liability for Hamas. It is no coincidence that Ismail Haniyeh proposed a cease-fire and offered to release Shalit in exchange for Israel's release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners. Olmert was right to turn down that offer. Israel should not grant this murderous terror organization recognition and legitimacy....Firstly, because it is impossible to trust an organization with so many branches, each doing whatever it likes. Secondly, we cannot negotiate with a prime minister who is not prepared to recognize Israel's existence. Thirdly, we cannot strengthen Hamas at the expense of Abbas, the only reasonable partner we have, even if he is a weak one. And most importantly, Hamas cannot be allowed to emerge from Summer Rains claiming any kind of strategic victory. ...Israel cannot refuse to negotiate for the release of the kidnapped soldier, but there can be no formal talks with governments that grant recognition to Hamas. Those who fire rockets day after day at civilian populations deserve to watch their houses go up in smoke and their supporters bleed. The purpose of Israel's military actions is to force them to end the rocket fire and return the abducted soldier. ...If Haniyeh says he is prepared for a hudna and negotiations, one can only assume that Summer Rains is starting to put pressure on him. At the same time, Israel should not be turning away those who have expressed goodwill, like Hosni Mubarak, who are doing what they can to mediate secretly for Shalit's release and an end to the Qassam

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attacks. In war, dialogue is also an option - provided we keep a billy-club in hand."

### IV. "Between Gilad and Ron Arad"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (7/11): "What we saw on Monday from Khaled Mashal in Damascus was another stage in the negotiations that Hamas is conducting, through mediators, with Israel. A battle of nerves is going on here, psychological warfare, deception and obfuscation, and all the maneuvers that have been written in, or erased from, the book of dirty tricks. Israel is being careful not to touch the talks with a ten-foot pole. Therefore, Olmert can continue to deny their existence, on the one hand, while receiving detailed reports about their progress (or setbacks) on the other, and survive.... The inclusive circular deal that the parties are now discussing (and denying) is branching out. Jerusalem officials are now talking about continuing the Sisyphean effort to solve the case of navigator Ron Arad. It is likely that an effort is under way to introduce this factor into the deal. Tehran's inclusion in this equation, i.e. solving of the mystery of Ron Arad after so very many years, could shuffle the cards and change the rules that the Prime Minister declares three times a day. As noted, this is a shot in the dark, but diplomatic sources in Jerusalem said this week: "The effort in the case of Ron Arad is continuing all the time, and more intensively."

JONES